

"Transcend the Ordinary"

Elul 5777 - Kislev 5778 / September - November 2017

40th Anniversary Memories

In our last issue of the JGF we asked for the submission of memories to help celebrate our four decades. We begin in this issue with the reminiscences of the Nacamullis, Jonathan Funk and Terry Fletcher. We look forward to sharing your stories in future issues.

FLORENCE NACAMULLI

Steve and I came from NY to SF on a whim for a weekend in 1971. We looked around and thought, how can we go back to NY with a place like this? So we didn't! We call the last 46 years our long weekend. From the time we arrived we visited many shuls looking to make a connection. We visited Conservative shuls as well as hippie shuls. None of them spoke to us. Our first visit to Sha'ar Zahav was for Erev Yom Kippur in 1986. We read the

machzor and participated in the service. Neither of us had ever had an experience like this. We knew that night that we had come home. When we applied for membership we were interviewed by past president Cheryl Orvis (z"l). We told her that CSZ did not feel like a Reform shul; she told us that because of the varied religious backgrounds of the members we were really Reconservadox.

That did it. Dues were sent in immediately.

TERRY FLETCHER

I never thought I would join a synagogue. I was raised as an anti-religion atheist by disillusioned Jewish parents. We celebrated no Jewish holidays except for Hanukkah and never went near a synagogue or JCC. The *(continued on page 10)*

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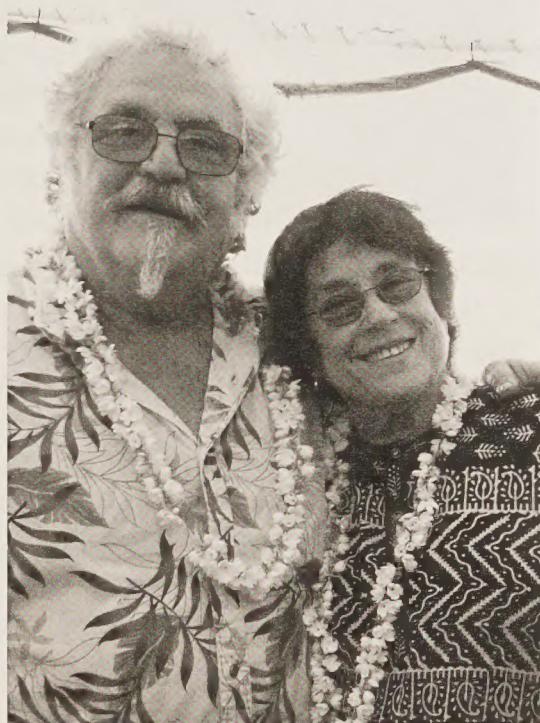
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Living In The Contradictions

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



I have been loath to admit in polite company that my favorite book of the Tanakh (the Jewish scriptures that include the Torah and other writings) is Kohelet, ever since someone reading Kohelet in a study group I was leading years ago unabashedly exclaimed, "This is horrible!" But I love it. Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) is full of paradoxes, and I believe that it is in the contradictions of life that we discover our deepest tensions and greatest insights. Kohelet allows us to see religion at its best, leading us to one of the few places where we can take our big questions. And this is what makes reading Kohelet so appropriate as a preparation for the High Holy Days, even though it is usually read during Sukkot.

Kohelet is philosophical, poetic, morbid, existential. It is as confused as we are – about life, death and our purpose. If Judaism is not a tradition of clear-cut answers, but of multiple opinions standing side by side, then Ecclesiastes is the quintessential Jewish book. In one moment King Solomon despairs that life is futile

and there is "nothing new under the sun"; in another, we are told that we should eat, drink and enjoy love, since our days are fleeting. In one breath, he orders us to do whatever is in our power with all our might, and in the next proclaims that whatever happens was predestined and that everything happens for a reason (to everything, turn, turn, turn). Are we so different? Not many of us live with one philosophy that consistently explains life's most perplexing questions. Whether we are feeling up or down can cause major fluctuations in our sense of life's meaning – or lack thereof. Like Kohelet, we often vacillate between competing truths. We shift as we experience new things; a birth, a loss or illness sends us searching for new answers that rest side by side with other truths.

Kohelet comforts by letting us know that it is not only we who are vexed. Likewise, when we stand together during the High Holy Days each of us reciting the Ashamnu, Al Cheit or the prayers of our heart, we look to our loved ones and community not for answers, but for safe spaces to ponder life and death. We are strengthened knowing we are part of a community of seekers living their own paradoxes and seeking meaning together, and that we are members of a congregation that understands

(continued on page 14)

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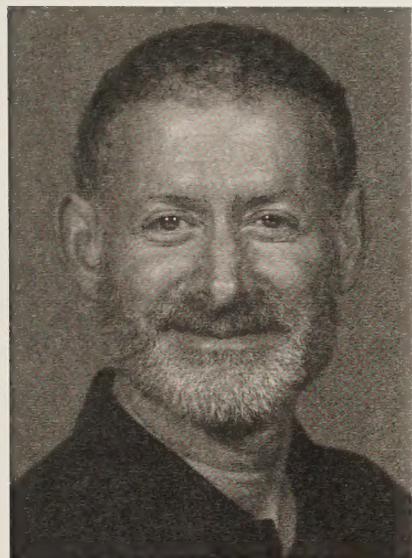
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Sealing My Book

By MICHAEL CHERTOK



It's that time of year again when the Jewish High Holy Days will be upon us. For many of us it seems to happen suddenly. Of course, we are Jews and most of us feel that we must attend services, at least for Erev Rosh Hashanah and probably some portion of the services on Yom Kippur. We might get together with family members or friends for a nice meal. If Yom Kippur falls on a weekday, we'll take the day off work. Isn't that what distinguishes us as Jews in America today?

If our goal is merely to mark an annual ritual to hold onto an internal self-conception that we are Jewish, and to show others in our secular world that we are slightly different as Jews, perhaps that is enough. But our annual ritual of t'shuvah (reflection) is a treasure that has the potential to offer us so much more.

Personally, I try to start to prepare well before Rosh Hashanah with some study. If possible, I will read about the Holy Days or join a workshop. Last year, I shared with you one of my favorite books to prepare for the High Holy Days, Rabbi Alan Lew's (z"l), *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*. Another good one is Rabbi Kerry Olitzky's *Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days*.

I'm not very good at writing regularly in a journal, but as Rosh Hashanah approaches, I remember how helpful this is for me. I dig out the notebook that I keep, review what I've written in past years, and start to write about where I am now. I consider what's happened over the past year in my relationships with my partner, my family and close friends. I write about where I've achieved my goals in my work, and also where I've fallen short. Now I also consider my volunteer role in our congregation. I start to think about my goals for the coming year. Perhaps I will write two or three times in preparation for our observances. Then, on the day of Yom Kippur, I will bring my journal with me when I come to the Herbst. (continued on page 14)

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Going Beyond

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



I've had a thing for infinity for as long I can remember.

The idea of it, representing endless possibilities, reaching and stretching out farther than the mind can see. The mystery of it, that there is always something to be explored just one step beyond. And the lovely symbol

of it, which I feel as if I could trace forever.

At some point, it occurred to me that the Kaddish represents a form of infinity. When teaching about the Kaddish, I often start with an exercise: write down every word of praise you can think of. When you think you're done, keep going. And going. And going. Keep going until you've squeezed out every single possibility, mined everything from the depths of your mind and being, can't think of anything else. This is what I call the l'eilah moment.

In the second paragraph of Kaddish, there is a sequence of eight praise words, building on each other, and then the word l'eilah. Beyond. Beyond all blessing, songs, praises, and comforts that are uttered in the world. In other words, God (however we perceive God) is much more than we can describe.

That's where infinity comes in. However much we can think of, there is always more. One more word of praise. One more song. One more comfort. And then one more beyond that, and so forth.

On High Holy Days, we say not just l'eilah, but l'eilah u-l'eilah, beyond and beyond. Or the beyond of the beyond. One of our b'nei mitzvah students once told me that there was infinity 2.

Infinity 2? How can there be infinity 2? Isn't infinity just infinity?

I don't know about the math of it, but I believe there is a question of perception. We can only grasp so much of the infinite. Anything beyond that is, at least for me, more theoretical than true comprehension. So when I'm faced with the idea of the beyond of the beyond, the infinite of the infinite, it's more of a widening.

"However much we can think of, there is always more. One more word of praise. One more song. One more comfort."

-Sharon Bernstein

I go along all year with my usual idea of the vastness of possibilities within the universe, and then -- wham! -- for 10 days a year, it's expanded by a multiple of what I had already perceived as the utmost.

High Holy Days can be so many things; wrapped within its cloak are liturgies and practices both old and new, a tangible spiritual buffet to meet any need we might bring to it. This High Holy Days, I'd like to invite us all to bring l'eilah u-l'eilah to whatever we experience, to infinitely widen our perceptions of possibilities: in ourselves, in our community, and in the world. And go beyond.

Shana Tova um'tukah! Wishing us all a year of great peace, sweetness and well-being.

Getting To Know You

By HEIDY ZOHAR RAMIREZ / Director of Engagement

Growing up in an interfaith family I learned to understand two distinct traditions and to appreciate what they shared, the important differences between them and the intertwined history. This knowledge strengthened my connection to Judaism, primarily through choice. My upbringing made me aware of the importance of being welcomed. I am excited to take on an integral role in shaping Sha'ar Zahav's future because it is a beautiful and inimitable community. At Sha'ar Zahav, my otherness is not only tolerated, it is embraced. This is the message I plan to share with any and all friends and members of Sha'ar Zahav.

A Los Angeles native, my Jewish experiences included the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Nefesh, Mazon, Netiya, Ikar and the Westside JCC. Traveling through Israel with Birthright was also influential in my participation with Jewish organizations.

Just after completing my undergraduate degree at American Jewish University, I interned for the business development team at the Progressive Jewish Alliance and was fortunate to take part in Bend the Arc's enriching Jeremiah Fellowship program in Los Angeles.

In the few weeks I've been at Sha'ar Zahav, one of the many highlights has been meeting and learning from the community. It is inspiring to meet the people who have so passionately shaped Sha'ar Zahav over the past 40 years.

You have created a safe space where everyone is welcomed and embraced, and where all types of Jews can rejoice and continue practicing (or create new) traditions. While I work to ensure the success of Sha'ar Zahav, I will keep in mind that I am preserving a unique space that is welcoming to the otherness of all.

HIGH HOLY DAYS – 5778

Slichot & Havdalah – 290 Dolores, Saturday, 9/16 at 7:30 pm

Erev Rosh Hashanah – Herbst Theatre – Wednesday, 9/20 at 7:30 pm

Rosh Hashanah – Herbst Theatre – Thursday, 9/21 at 9:30 am

Rosh Hashanah Day 2 – 290 Dolores – Friday, 9/22 at 9:30 am

Annual Cemetery Service – Hills of Eternity – Sunday, 9/24 at 10 am

Yom Kippur Kol Nidre – Herbst Theatre – Friday, 9/29 at 7:30 pm

Yom Kippur – Herbst Theatre – Saturday, 9/30 at 9:30 am

Tickets for members and guests can be reserved at www.shaarzahav.org.

Check out further details in the weekly "In The Know" email.

Reflecting The Larger Community

By LEEAHT SEGEV / Director of Education



One of the most frequent comments I hear when people learn that I run a school is: Wow, it must be great to have summers off! In truth summer is the busiest time of year.

There is so much to do to get the school ready for the upcoming year. From the

mundane, like registration and tidying up, to the more involved curriculum work and teacher training. There is also High Holy Day work to be done to ensure we have wonderful family programming available. This year in particular is a busy summer as we work to launch a brand new Hebrew and Judaica curriculum.

While the work is just beginning, I am already so excited. This year in Judaica our children will be exploring curriculum units about Jewish Values, Jews around the World, LGBTQ Jews, Passover and Torah. Most of these units will end with an Inter-Generational Day where the students will have an opportunity to become the teacher and show the community what they have been learning.

Mark your calendars now for October 21 and December 16, which will be our first two Inter-Generational Days of the year. We will have an opportunity to reflect on High Holy Days in October, and a chance to tour around the world with a cultural fair and Hanukkah party in December. Both these days will be from 9am-11:50 with a special shortened Shabbat service.

At the end of the school year, our youngest students will complete work on their two year long Torah project. They have created their own Torah which they will give to Sha'ar Zahav. Our

older students will also start work this year on making their own siddur. This will also be a multi-year project that will allow them to not only learn their prayers, but also add their own reflections and words.

*"we are a unique shul
with a rich history."*

-Leeaht Segev

All of this is being done with the goal of having our Sha'ar Zahav school reflect the larger Sha'ar Zahav community. Just as we are a unique shul with a rich history, beautiful siddur and a loving community, our school should be the same. So please, keep your eye out for updates for opportunities to come join the school families. Then you can not only see what our students are up to, but also be part of a morning of community bonding and learning.

Religious School registration is now open!

No synagogue membership required
until the 4th grade!

Take part in an exciting new experiential and project-based curriculum that will cover Hebrew, prayers and Judaica.

Special units on LGBTQ Jews and Jews of Color with an emphasis on community building.

Questions? contact Leeaht Segev, Education Director, education@shaarzahav.org

Or, for more information, go to
www.shhaarzahav.org

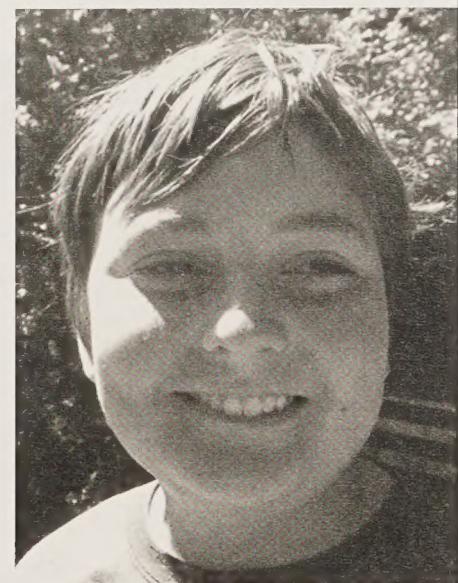
Meet The B'nei Mitzvah

FINCH DIGIROLAMO KLEIN

Finch Matai DiGirolamo Klein, son of Lisa DiGirolamo and Janet Klein, and brother of Asa, will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on October 14. He is a lifelong member of Sha'ar Zahav, religiously making the long trek into the city from his home in Fairfax to attend Beit Sefer.

Finch is an eighth grader at the Sterne School in San Francisco where he has been recognized by his teachers and peers as a model citizen and baker of tasty treats. Finch is an avid cook who frequently assumes dinner-making responsibilities at home. He aspires to run his own beach-side restaurant in Hawaii. In his spare time, he enjoys swimming, kayaking, camping, drawing, video games and hanging out with his dogs.

Finch would like to thank his bar mitzvah mentor Laurie Trupin as well as his drash mentor Avi Goldberg for their support and dedication.



GABRIEL GLUCK

Gabriel Gluck, son of Christine Young and David Gluck, will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on October 28. An eighth grader at Roosevelt Middle School in San Francisco, Gabriel enjoys math, science and participating in the Maker's Club. He was co-awarded second prize in the school-wide Science Fair in 6th grade. Gabriel is currently a purple-belt in Tae Kwon Do, loves reading graphic novels, hanging out and Skyping with friends, testing his coordination and parkour skills, playing computer games and the card game "Magic the Gathering." He excels at winning any game involving strategy and logic, has a witty sense of humor, and enjoys playing imaginative games with his sister Violet. Gabriel hopes to have a career as a computer animator, and has already had one of his animations shown publicly. Gabriel and his family would like to thank mentors Martin Tannenbaum, Danny Kodmur, Ila Cherney, Cantor Bernstein, and all his Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer teachers for their support.



ABRAHAM NATHANIEL KATZ

Abraham will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on November 11. Abe lives in Oakland with his parents Anna and Josh, sister Sophie, and dog Zav. He attends Contra Costa Jewish Day School in Lafayette. Music and art have always been a part of Abe's life starting with piano in preschool and onto acoustic guitar, digital music composition, 3D modeling, graphic design and playing electric guitar in his school's rock band. Inspired by his YouTube idols, Abe recently took up filmmaking and has started his own videography and photography business to support his creative projects. Abe wishes to one day travel the world as a professional videographer. When not making art, you can find Abe outside learning parkour, flipping on his trampoline, or in Tahoe snowboarding and skiing. Abe and his family are especially thankful for Abe's mentors Jon Edelman, Cantor Bernstein and Hillary Zaid for their support and teaching throughout this process.

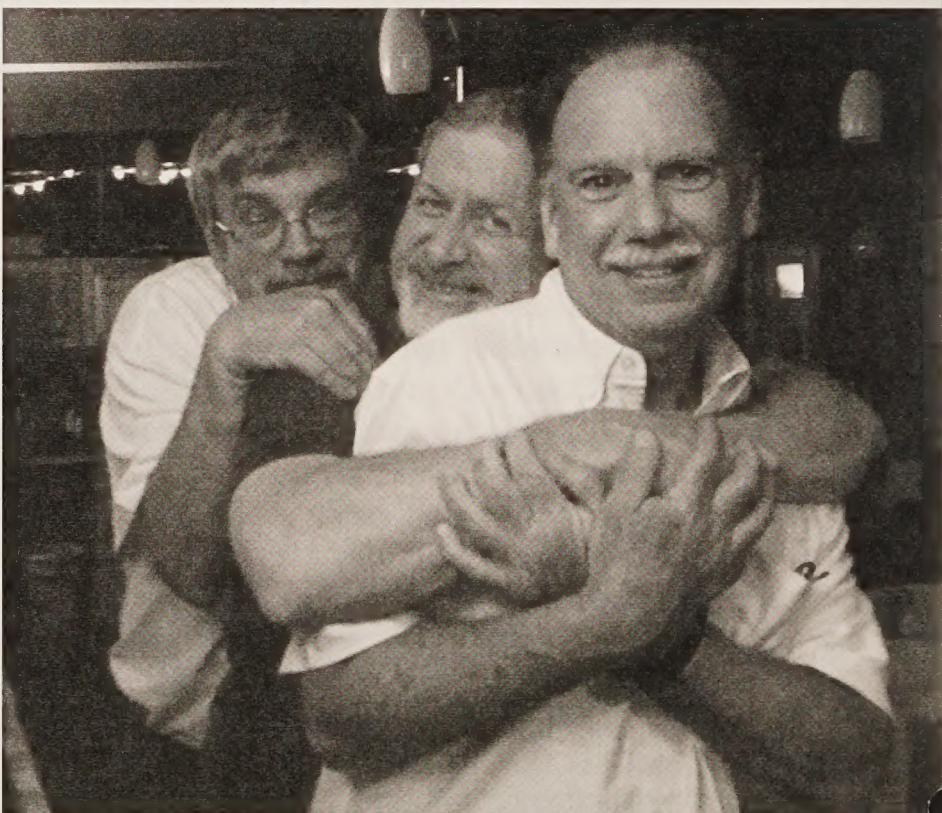


Advancing Into The Future

By KAREN SCHILLER

On the first weekend in July almost 40 Sha'ar Zahavniks, along with Rabbi Copeland and Cantor Bernstein, ventured up to Wildwood Retreat Center near Guerneville for two days of dreaming and planning for Sha'ar Zahav's future.

We talked about our own experiences at Sha'ar Zahav, imagined what Sha'ar Zahav could be like in the future, and discussed practical things we could be doing right now to ensure that we have the resources we need to make our dreams a reality. We also enjoyed good food, swimming, hiking, practicing yoga and celebrating Shabbat together.



SEAN KAGAN & ARATA TOMIYOSHI-KAGAN

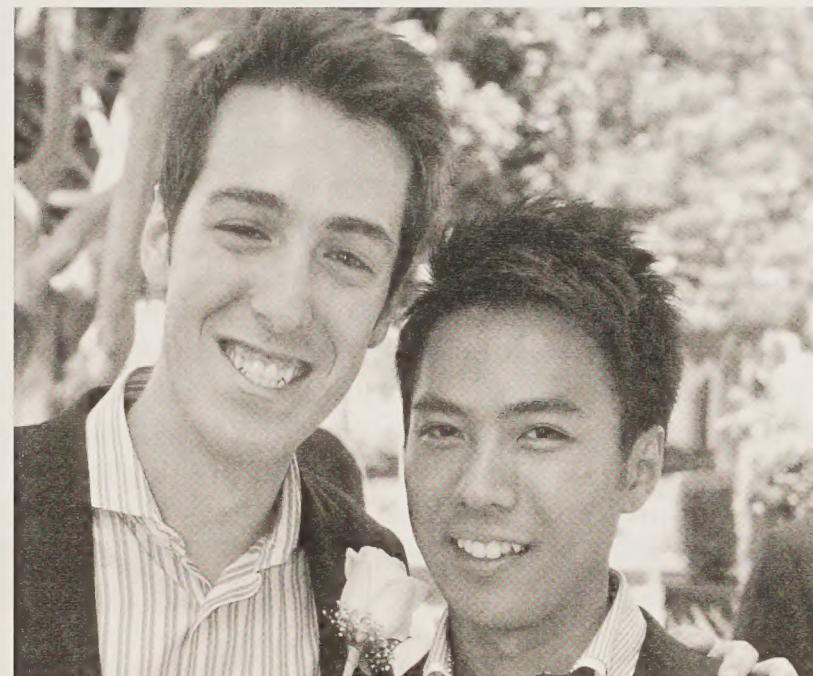
By HEIDI ZOHAR RAMIREZ / Director of Engagement

Sean Kagan and Arata Tomiyoshi-Kagan arrived in San Francisco just a few months ago.

Sean was born and raised in Los Angeles. He attended Stephen S. Wise Hebrew Day School and graduated from Oakwood High School in North Hollywood. Sean received his BA from USC in 2011 and is currently working as Vice Consul at the British Consulate-General in San Francisco. Sean builds long-term relationships with technology companies and acts as their gateway to all governmental agencies.

His primary role is to work with strategic decision makers in companies as they grow their operations across the Atlantic, using the United Kingdom as a springboard for their global growth and international success.

Arata grew up in Japan with a cultural connection to Buddhism. He graduated from UCLA in 2012 with a BA major in Sociology and a Global Studies minor. Arata is currently working in Customer Marketing Support at Wix.com. Since Sean



and Arata's marriage 3 years ago, they have been building a Jewish home. They are attracted to Sha'ar Zahav because of its diverse community and LGBTQ-centric approach to Judaism. They look forward to meeting other young professionals and engaging in community service work.

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONGREGATION

Welcome Our New Members!

Annie Atura & Tyler Bushnell

Paul Bodner

Elizabeth Cohen & Sacha Mons

John-David Feldman

Jan Half

Sean Kagan & Arata Tomiyoshi-Kagan

Edward Fristo & Tom Medin

Philip Prinz

Marissa Guerrero & Nicolas Rosenstone

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

June

Frances Edelman Karras,
mother of Alan Karras

Paul Rosenberg,
dear friend of Allan Gold and Alan Ferrara

Gordon Osser,

former member & dear friend of Phil Charney

July

James L. Friedman,
father of Anne Friedman

40th Anniversary Memories

(FROM THE COVER)

only time I set foot in a synagogue during my childhood was for a friend's bat mitzvah. I found the experience confusing and alienating.

In my early 30s a series of events led me to want to get more in touch with my Jewish heritage. But with my parents' anti-religious messages still ringing in my ears, I decided I needed to start with something secular. So I joined the San Francisco Jewish Folk Chorus, which at that time was directed by Sha'ar Zahav congregant José Luis Moscovich. After singing in the folk chorus for one season, José Luis invited me to sing with the High Holy Days choir at CSZ, which he directed as well. I liked him and I like singing Jewish music, so I said yes.

I began going to the rehearsals at the shul on Danvers Street. The music was beautiful and I continued to enjoy working with José Luis. But at the rehearsals the other singers would ask questions like, "Is this for Shachrit or Musaf?" "Will we be singing this at Kol Nidre?" "What about Yizkor?" The names of these services were a total mystery to me! I had heard of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but knew absolutely nothing about them. Too embarrassed to ask my multitude of questions during the rehearsal, I would stay afterwards to ask José Luis about these mysterious service names, petrified that I would have no idea what to sing when. The first year I sang at Rosh Hashanah services, I asked my principal at the elementary school where I taught to cover my classroom while I dashed off to the Unitarian Church on Franklin Street, sang at the service, then raced back to teach the rest of the day. On Yom Kippur I sang and then went home for lunch thinking snidely, "Why are those crazy people fasting? That's nuts!"

But every year I sang again and every year I began to stay for more of the services. I even tried going to a Friday night Shabbat service or two at the shul on Danvers St. I still remember my first Shabbat service. I sat nervously in the pew, not knowing a single song, melody

or prayer. I half expected someone to confront me, saying, "Why are you here if you don't know these songs? You must not be Jewish." But no one seemed to mind or notice that I didn't know the songs. Gradually I learned some. I was also very gratified to find out that many congregants and even the rabbi at the time, Yoel Kahn, talked openly about their struggles with faith in G-d. I began to relax and consider that I might belong.

About 10 years after attending that first Rosh Hashanah service, I finally joined Sha'ar Zahav. I now fast every year on Yom Kippur, have led a committee, given a drash, co-led the East Bay Havurah, and represented CSZ on the Jewish Community Relations Council. I still have not had a Bat Mitzvah, have only begun to learn Hebrew and still don't have much of a relationship with G-d. But I am very appreciative of Sha'ar Zahav for the richness of Jewish experience I have gained in my 14 years as a member.



JONATHAN FUNK

My first visit to Sha'ar Zahav was in the fall of 1982, on a Friday night just a couple of days

after I moved to San Francisco from Boston, right between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

I was eager to check out the local “gay synagogue” I had heard about while back East, and to be sure I’d have someplace to go for services on Yom Kippur. I arrived early for services and was greeted by Paul Cohen who wasted no time grilling this newcomer as to whether or not I knew any Hebrew and if I could possibly sing the blessing for candle lighting that evening. I was nervous to accept this honor since I wasn’t sure of local custom for

the melody and such, but I agreed. I sang the blessing at the appointed moment for the small group of attendees, and apparently acquitted myself well enough that I was invited within moments of the conclusion of the service to join the Ritual Committee.

I became a member of the synagogue a few weeks later and then began attending Ritual Committee meetings; I have been a member of the Ritual Committee and have led Shabbat and High Holy Days services ever since.

SHA'AR ZAHAV **COMMUNITY**

Annie Atura & Tyler Bushnell

By HEIDY ZOHAR RAMIREZ / Director of Engagement

When Annie Atura and Tyler Bushnell moved from the Peninsula to their new apartment in the Mission a few months ago, they were delighted to find Sha'ar Zahav right around the corner! The couple met at Stanford in 2011 and will be married in September. They both hail from New Mexico.

Annie is a doctoral student at Stanford's English Department with a PhD minor in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She is cross-listed under Jewish Studies and runs a colloquium on feminist and queer theory.

She writes about why so many prominent white American feminists have been Jews, and she welcomes your thoughts on the subject! Annie also runs Stanford Aerobics and Yoga, where she teaches yoga, Pilates, and barre.

Tyler is a product designer at Apple, where he has worked since he received his Master's in Mechanical Engineering in 2013. When he's not working, Tyler designs and builds clean-looking furniture out of found materials. He also loves being in the ocean and playing instruments with which he has no familiarity.



Tyler was welcomed into the Jewish community at Shabbat morning services on July 22nd.

Tyler and Annie invite members to their aufruf on September 2, which they'll be using as an opportunity to introduce their friends and family to Sha'ar Zahav. There will be cragels!

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Laura Lowe

Chai Fund (Building)

Irene Ogas
Larry Wexler
Estate of Gerald Rosenstein

May 26-27

Flowers by Paul Cohen & Robert Guterman,
in honor of Rabbi Ted Riter

Oneg by Alison Green & Lillian Sekler
in honor of Alison's being
welcomed into the covenant

June 16-17

Flowers by the congregation,
in honor of Karen Schiller & Alex Ingersoll,
co-chairs of the rabbi search committee

July 7-8

Flowers by the congregation,
in honor of Terry Fletcher for her
efforts as our representative to the JCRC

(Cont.)

Oneg by Ruth Schoenbach & Lynn Eden,
in honor of Rabbi Mychal Copeland

July 14-15

Flowers by the Heath & Katz Family,
in honor of Carrie Kwong

Oneg by Alex Ingersoll & Martin Tannenbaum
in honor of Lowell Caulder being
welcomed into the covenant

July 22

Kiddush by Annie Atura,
in honor of Tyler Bushnell being
welcomed into the covenant

Your contributions help us realize our commitment to building and maintaining a vibrant, living community for Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. A donation can be a meaningful way to honor friends or family, engagements, anniversaries, graduations, for special thanks, or to memorialize a loved one. Collectively, with your financial support, we continue to prosper, grow, and celebrate our future.

President's Message (From Page 3)

At some point during that day, I will review what I've written and make a few more notes. Before the gates are closed during Kol Nidre, I have finished writing. My personal book is sealed, I hope for another good year.

Everyone's relationship to the High Holy Days is unique. I don't expect that my particular rituals will match your style. However, I do urge you to consider how you will prepare this year.

By the way, this year Yom Kippur falls on a Saturday, so there's no need to take a day off from work. Perhaps that's an opportunity to make your own special time to prepare for the holidays this year.

Rabbi's Message (From Page 2)

the value of listening and caring support. As we begin our first year together, I look forward to exploring the big questions with you. May you and your loved ones be inscribed for a year of good health and happiness.



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David Gellman
DGellman@g3mh.com

Arthur Meirson
AMeirson@g3mh.com

September

1 John Golebowski
 2 Inbal Kashtan
 3 Lee Gierson
 5 Bernard Pechter
 6 Elliot Klein
 11 Daniel McGoldrick
 17 Phillip Yanofsky
 18 Penny Dachinger
 20 Edward Wolberg
 24 David Pierce
 25 Jeffrey Lewis Cohen
 28 William Korthof

October

6 Jeffrey A. Miller
 9 Rabbi Benjamin Marcus
 12 Andrew Zysman
 13 Harry Clint Bigglestone
 18 Henry Mautner
 20 Duane Kearns Puryear

(Cont.)
 21 Osna Elsa Frischman
 24 Glenn Murray Miller
 29 Michael Mohr

November

3 Forrest Kincade
 4 Lillian Yanofsky
 5 Harvey Levine
 5 Richard D. Wright
 7 Donald Albert
 9 Ruth Shaber-Wishner
 11 Bruce Apter
 11 Sidney Rosenthal
 16 Chuck Norton
 19 William David Holt II
 22 Tristano Palermino
 25 George Mintzer
 26 Rose Truffias Steinberg
 27 Harvey Milk

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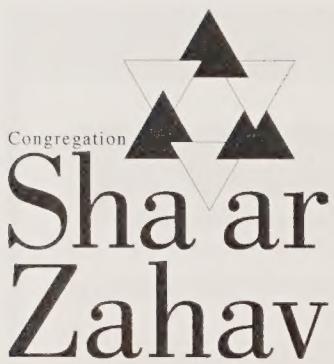
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Additional programming for children will be offered before and after family services.

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See www.shaarzahav.org for more details and to register.

** Advance* signup is required if you will be leaving your child in childcare.

**The schedule of High Holy Day
services can be found on page 5.**